

EARLY SUMMER NIGHTS ^{in the} THEATRE.

MUSIC and VAUDEVILLE PREDOMINATE.

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FANNIE PRICE

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MA BELLE

The final exasperation of David Belasco at the threats and suits of the amateur playwrights, has led him to the wise conclusion that the waste basket is the only safe place for their unsolicited contributions. How novel would be a suit brought against a playwright of reputation by one of his colleagues. Suppose, for instance, Charles Klein should sue Augustus Thomas. What a departure from the average case of the kind in which some unknown person is suddenly made aware by the success of a play from the pen of a well known dramatist that his own work, which had for hook or crook come under the observation of the playwright, had in it the elements of great popularity. So common has this experience become that every successful play is almost as a matter of course followed by a suit. The most amusing case of this character followed the appearance of Eugene Walter's drama "The Eastward Way." In this instance the novel from which the drama was said to be taken seemed to the casual reader to bear only the most superficial resemblance to the play.

There are rarely if ever suits of this kind brought by playwrights, because they know just in the proportion that they know their craft how unimportant the idea of a play may be. However great it may seem, however novel or timely, the idea is a negative quality until the alchemy of the playwright has made it gold.

The collaborations of Dumas and Victorien Sardou and of the great d'Ennery, were the result in most cases of the meeting of two minds which had something to contribute to the creation of a work which might potentially conquer the world. It may have been a social study or only a French farce or a light satire on divorce. In any case the idea came from one of two collaborators and the skill in utilizing it from the other. Of the two elements it was in the majority of cases the idea which was the less valuable in its crude state. The playwright, able by his technical experience to make any suggestion more or less available for his purpose, might readily find other ideas. The possessor of the theme, however admirable it may be from its interest or its purpose, will be quite helpless to make it valuable.

Anybody who doubts the comparative worth of the original idea of a play or its skillful development by the rules of the playwright need only look over the list of a season's failures on the New York stage. Very few of the season's hopeless crop of amateurish fiascos fail to be provided with some interesting starting point. The majority of them are plentifully lacking in what makes any life possible for a play.

When Arthur Pinero published to the world "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," Paul Lindau murmured "Die Schattent" between his teeth and more than one student of the stage whispered "Adolphe Bellet" when "The Thunderbolt" came along to suggest "Le Testament de Cesar Godillot." Mme. Simone said that "The Rainbow" seemed to her very much like "Son Pere," but she did not mention "The Little Treasure," which used to be a popular play in the repertoire of Lester Wallack and antedated by a generation both plays, in which a daughter was the means of punishing her parents. Such resemblances are so familiar that the professional playwright never regards them of importance. He knows how much more essential is the treatment. If, on the other hand, the amateur playwright detects what he regards as the slightest resemblance between his work and one that succeeds and it happens that the author of the play may have had access to the manuscript, then the lawyer is summoned over the telephone and the genius of the unknown writer is avenged.

The professional playwright does not trouble himself about the relation between "The Schattent" and "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," or "The Little Treasure" and "Son Pere," or "Hazel Kirke" and "The Green Lanes of England," because he knows in the first place that there were plays even before these and that there were authors to treat every idea in accordance with the feeling of their time. They know, moreover, these men who make the theatre a study and a profession, that it is not in the subject so much as in its scientific exploitation that the secret of success is to be found. It takes only the amateur to see in the resemblance between two subjects the identity which is in his eyes the soul of a successful drama. So Mr. Belasco has wisely taken a precaution which will in the future protect him from the onslaughts of the amateurs whose ambitions will lead them to cause him more trouble than the profit he may ever expect from a good idea will compensate for.

Nobody remembers to-day, with the exception of two or three who afterward distinguished themselves alone, the collaborators of the Dumas, Sardou and the rest of the French playwrights of their time. What they contributed went into the crucible of the greater genius and came out so deeply marked with its traits that nobody ever attributed it to another. The claimants to the honors of authorship in this country are unique in that they are rarely if ever heard of afterward. Of all the numerous litigants struggling to establish their rights as authors—and a majority must have directed their charge against Mr. Belasco—there was never one that came to any later or fuller fame. This is just as true of the men who claimed that other dramatists had written their works. Why a talent which started out so bravely should be so suddenly cut short in its development is another unanswered question in this interesting field.

There are few figures in the contemporary theatre of this country who come in for fewer kind words than the author. He is held by the thoughtful observer of the stage as little less reprehensible than the manager. His ideals are regarded as equally commercial and he is thought by that part of the community which may deserve to be called high-brow unfaithful to the task to which he has dedicated himself. Yet whenever an unappreciated genius such as his play has been used by a conscienceless playwright it is always a drama which has met with commercial success, that is to say, it has pleased so many persons that the theatre has been crowded while it was given. It is just these dramas which are always accepted as the subject of such attacks as Mr. Belasco has determined to guard against. It is in vain that one searches to find some drama of a wholly worthy and uplifting nature which has enjoyed the enthusiastic praise of a few enthusiasts who probably got into the theatre at very small cost—it is indeed impossible to find a single case in which an injured genius endeavored to establish a right to the ownership of such a work.

Various causes influence the dramatists who must establish their title by such proceedings. In the majority of cases in which a book is said to be used as the inspiration for a play it is usually with the object of advertising the book. In other cases it is usually the delight in self-advertising which inspires the claimants.

How far the process called unconscious cerebration may lead one to revive previous knowledge of a play is very amusingly described in William Archer's new book on play making. The distinguished critic is discussing the danger that may exist when a writer decides to write a play with no particular theme as his inspiration but merely sets out to devise a plot. Mr. Archer after he had decided to write a play took a long walk and returned home quite satisfied that his play was not after all to be bad of its kind. He was rather disappointed on reflection to discover that the play he had devised was in fact nothing else than "Hedda Gabler." Apart from the deep sympathies which one must feel for the critic who evolved this specimen of the Ibsen theatre as an ideal drama, the incident is entertaining as illustrating how a subject may remain in the mind only to assert itself later in such a way as that which led Mr. Archer to abandon his career as a dramatist. Probably that was for the best, if his inclination led him to the thought of composing more of "Hedda Gabler."

A. B. Wakeley found no difficulty in tracing from the "Adelphi" of Terence the idea which inspired Eugene Labiche to his most famous comedy, "Les Petits Oiseaux," which Sydney Grundy used for "A Pair of Spectacles." It is by no means probable that the idea of the change of view toward life on the part of a man capable of the kindest motives has been as yet exhausted. Something playwright will find just as inspiring its motive and the world will be richer by another masterpiece of this type. So the freshness of subject is a matter about which the skilled playwright may be more or less indifferent. The collaborator who supplies one may be a most valued assistant. It is a question, however, whether or not he is as important as the one who gives the idea its only value in the theatre. This is the man who puts the thought into the form which is indispensable to its vitality on the stage.

One of the frequent defences of the Ibsen theatre which yearly ceases to appeal to the public in the numbers which can alone keep a drama vital is that Ibsen revealed the modern woman as no other dramatist of his time. He revealed a certain type of the modern woman,

but it is in his failure to draw a recognizable woman of the more cultivated kind that the principal weakness of his plays lies. The women of the Nora type, which is the most vital of them all, has some bourgeois reality and is cosmopolitan in comparison with the provincialism of most of the others. There is the element of tragedy to enable *Rebecca West* and *Regina* differs in no detail from any servant who uses her post in a household instead of the sidewalks to carry on her inevitable profession. To writers or painters or bohemians of any kind, to use the word in its best old sense, the women of Ibsen may all seem profoundly real. Men accustomed to the graces and charm of femininity of a more refined type, at least of a more cosmopolitan character, will find difficulty in identifying any of these creatures with the women whom they know and see. And they are all so distinctively of the race of their creator. The gallery is exclusively Scandinavian. The women of Ibsen bear the same relation to the women of Strindberg do or the woman of "L'Age Difficile." And what a charming lot they are. What alluring specimens of the race. What a place of torture the theatre would be for the average man were he condemned to witness only such modern women as these whenever he went to the play.

The last of the revivals of the operetta of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan took place at the Casino yesterday afternoon when "The Mikado" was sung. None of this immortal series so well stands revival as the Japanese work. It is not unjust to say after hearing the recent performances of these old operetta that they are for this generation a little tepid. They need the most perfect interpretation possible and they are not injured by any changes that the present producers may suggest. They are as a

the eye, which is now the first sense to which theatrical purveyors appeal to-day.

So there can be no excess in the way their scenic possibilities are realized. Recent revivals have been entirely adequate, but there has been no special effort to make them spectacular to the degree that even the most unpretentious musical play of the day is spectacular. There need be no objection to the modernizing of the lines in some cases when they are as good as De Wolf Hopper's verse about the suffragette in the policeman's chorus. The Gilbert & Sullivan operas should indeed be made as attractive as possible with the aid of every means not at variance with good taste and the spirit of the works.

Whether or not more of the operas are to be revived seems uncertain. The exhausted imagination of the press agent is likely at this time to dwell on permanent musical stock companies as a relief from the threat to carry to London in its entirety some production in need of a boost, so there are the usual threats of the company that will later give all the operettas which have not so far been introduced to the present generation of playgoers. "The Yeoman of the Guard," beautiful as its music is, probably never earned for its promoters any such profits as some of the operas. "Ruddy Gore" was a failure here and "Princess Ida" was never sung to large or numerous audiences, although John Stetson, who produced the work at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, is said to have paid a larger royalty for this work than any of the others sold for "The Gondoliers" was never liked here in spite of its beautiful score and its delightful satire on British political life. So it seems as if there would be little opportunity for any continued revivals of these operettas which were such a joy as they came from the hands of their creators to a grateful world.



GIOVANNI MARTINELLI

NEW TENOR FROM ITALY.

The Latest Young Singer to Come Here.

Giovanni Martinelli, who is mentioned as one of the new singers who have been engaged for the Metropolitan Opera House by Giulio Gatti-Casazza, has been the hero of the Covent Garden season in London. He is to come here since the audiences at the Metropolitan Opera House want

to hear an Italian in Italian operas and will not accept a French or a Turk or a Russian in his place. He is still young and his fame is only a matter of a few years. It was while singing in "The Girl of the Golden West" in Rome last summer that his fame travelled beyond the frontiers of his own country.

Martinelli is a native of Montagna. His father had been a wood carver so he naturally took to the same work. He was fond of music and had voice enough to enable him to enter the chorus of an opera company. So well did he perform his duties as a singer in the chorus that he was promoted to small parts and ultimately appeared in "Aida." His career on the stage was interrupted for three years while he served his term in the army. Here he played a clarinet in the regimental band and learned something of the theory of music. It was the bandmaster who heard him sing and was struck by the quality of his voice. He gave him a letter of introduction to a Milan agent and when he had sung for this man he offered to take him as a pupil to Mandolini, a Florentine teacher. For eighteen months he studied with him and then made his debut in Milan in "Ernani." He next sang in "Ruy Blas" and "Ballo in Maschera." He was then heard by Giacomo Puccini, who asked him to take part in the Roman performances of "The Girl of the Golden West." He succeeded Amadeo Bassi and has during the past season appeared in various Italian opera houses.

Martinelli is still paying a percentage of his salaries to the manager and the teacher who made it possible for him to undertake a professional career. He is said to be a far from finished singer to-day and his future greatness is said to depend only on his own desire to cultivate his talents, since he is gifted with a beautiful voice.

AT THE THEATRES THIS WEEK.

"Bought and Paid For" Has Its 350th Performance To-morrow.

"Bought and Paid For" will reach its 350th performance at William A. Brady's Playhouse to-morrow night. Although approaching the end of a continuous year's run the play is still drawing good audiences. Mr. Brady's comedy drama is the only serious play that has survived.

"Officer 666" at the Gaiety Theatre furnishes many mysterious and not a few melodramatic moments that are all the more enjoyable because of the substantial quality of its story. Additional appeal is furnished by the fact that its scenes are laid within a stone's throw of the playhouse in which they are staged.

The production of "Bunty Pulls the Strings" at the Comedy Theatre will continue its uninterrupted career throughout the summer season. Molly Pearson, who has played the title role with the New York company since the opening performance early last autumn, is soon to leave for a vacation and on July 8 her place will be temporarily filled by Molly McIntyre, who was the original Bunty in the Western company.

"A Winsome Widow" at the Ziegfeld Theatre will continue during the summer. Fifty noiseless electric fans add to the comfort of the audience on hot nights.

The musical play, "The Rose Maid," is a popular summer attraction. With its roof removed the Globe is cool and the crowds continue to come to see the operetta and its sextet of Kute Kiddies in their song number.

The Merry-go-Rounders, the summer burlesque production at the Columbia Theatre, begins its fourth week to-morrow afternoon. Several new comedy scenes will be introduced by George P. Murphy, Ralph Austin and Leona Stephens, and a new musical number by Irving Berlin, composer of "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and other popular songs, will be heard for the first time. It is called "The Soldier Ragtime Man."

The Paul J. Rainey African hunt pictures continue at the Lyceum Theatre, where they are now in their fourth month. The marvellous motion pictures of animal life in British East Africa have attracted much attention.

Harry Houdini and fifteen other numbers are promised at Hammerstein's Roof Garden and Victoria Theatre this week. Houdini

Ben Beyer and company, cycling messenger boys.

Daniel Frohman will give the first New York presentation of the one act play "Detective Keen," by Percival Knight, at the Union Square Theatre this week. In the cast will be Ruby Hoffman and Messrs. Palmer, Collins, Arthur House, William Shuler and Sterling Chesedine. Miss Ma Belle will make her first and only New York appearance in a spectacular dancing novelty called "The Garden of Eden." Clark and Hamilton, who offer a singing and dancing specialty, will reappear and the famous little comedian and actor Master Gabriel will present a new farce, "Little Kick." Madge Matland will entertain with a repertoire of songs, Muriel and Frances will be seen in a musical skit, Jarro, the trickster, will be on hand and Lew Hoffman will give a juggling exhibition.

Atop the Madison Square roof is a new restaurant and well chosen cabaret show, including good singers and pretty dancers.

The leading entertainers for the first half of the week at Proctor's 125th Street Theatre are Mildred Holland and her company in a new comedy playlet, "A Test Case." At Proctor's Twenty-third Street Theatre Aladdin, the Japanese water juggler and roller skater, will top the bill. Proctor's Fifty-eighth Street Theatre will offer Walter Percival and Harrington Reynolds and company in a powerful dramatic playlet, "The Choice," as the headliner. The programme will change on Thursday as the other playhouses.

AT THE PARKS AND BEACHES.

Good Vaudeville Programmes at the Brighton Theatres.

Jesse Lasky's new musical playlet "The Antique Air" will be seen at the New Brighton Theatre this week. There are twenty persons in the company and the principals are Fletcher Norton, Charles Pussey, Earl Wilson and Maude Earl. Fannie Price, the comedienne, will be another feature, and S. Miller Kent and company will appear in a dramatic playlet called "The Best Q." Among others on the programme are the Six Brown Brothers in a musical act, George B. Reno and company, whose skit is called "The Mist Army," the Juggernaut troupe of wire walkers, Minna Allen, an entertainer, the Ward Brothers, dancers, and the De Macos, acrobats.

Manager Breed has prepared a big bill for this week at the Brighton Beach Music Hall. Heading the programme will be

ding, famed as the original jail breaker and hand-out king, has a box of new sensations to reveal. The other numbers include Macey and Cantwell, who return with new songs, dances and jokes; Joe Jackson and his comedy act; Arthur Deacon, the singer, the Ferrins, in a surprise musical act, the Texas Tommy Dancers, the Victoria Four, Brie and Gonne, Bert Melrose, the Three Ernestos, Adair and Dale, and the two Baabs.

Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre will present this week no less than three new features. The first will be Thomas A. Wise in an original character sketch by Abigail Marshall, "Dad and Mother," which will give Mr. Wise ample scope for both comedy and sentiment. Something which should interest music lovers will be the debut of Carl Schuetz, harp soloist of the Philharmonic Society and Metropolitan Opera House orchestra. He will be assisted by Helie Deunna, soprano. The third new number will be De Witt Mott and Mary Maxfield in "The Salesman and the Manicurist," in which repartee figures. Others on the bill are Frank Mayne and company in "The Third Degree," Burnham and Greenwood, feminine acrobats, a pianologist, Welch, Mealy and Montrose in a classic of baseball experiences, Lane and O'Donnell, the lunatic tumblers, and

the two Baabs.

Some outspoken criticism was passed upon the British system of elementary education at the National Conference on the Prevention of Destitution held recently in London. The first speaker was John Arrowsmith, head master of a county school at Halifax.

He declared that the educational authorities had been using clipped bits of man's experience in the education of little children—things like arithmetic and French and freehand drawing. The result was a craving for excitement and an apparent distaste for all forms of work.

"What do our schools fit the children for?" he asked. "They cannot all be clerks, they cannot all serve behind shop counters, there is no inducement to go on the land; foundries and workshops have very little use for a boy of 16 or 17 who has never learned to use his hands."

Mr. Arrowsmith would not have the average child begin to learn to write till he is between 7 and 8 years old, to begin to read till he is 8½, or to begin to do sums till he is 10. His ideal elementary school would be a sort of larger home where all the industries that have raised man to his present standard of civilization shall be undertaken, where the necessities of child growth shall be satisfied, where the child will learn by actual doing what social service means and where moral education will be a matter of doing, not of preaching.

Lillian Shaw, who will offer a novelty in the way of Yiddish impersonations, Kate Elinore and Sam Williams will present their comedy skit "The Ir-regular Army." Al Fields and Jack Lewis will offer "The Misery of a Hanson Cab." Essie Clifford and Victor Mordecai will be seen in a singing and dancing sketch. Bert Fitzgerald will have a monologue. Gladys Clark and Henry Bergman will be heard in comedy sketch, and Wentworth, Vesta and Teddy, the acrobats, and the Four Onett Sisters in an aerial act will also appear.

The most noticeable feature of Luna this year is the number of free shows and attractions which the park contains. There is a long list, headed by the cabaret circus. There are band concerts every afternoon and evening, and twice a day, at 3 P.M. and 10 P.M., Will H. Hill does a daring wire walking and aerial suspension act.

Constantly increasing crowds are going to Glen Island in search of diversion. Boats run there hourly. The Grand Casino, the Germany, Beach Lawn and other restaurant and concession stands are all in full swing.

Among the North Beach attractions are vaudeville which the Terminal Music Hall, the free circus at Galt Park and German comedians and singers at Castle Garden.

ENGLISH SCHOOL SYSTEM CRITICISED

Prof. R. A. Gregory of London University pointed out that the pay of agricultural laborers was so low and the conditions of agricultural housing left so much to be desired that little enthusiasm could be expected for an educational movement to keep the people on the land.

In many districts the agricultural laborer lived under conditions approaching to serfdom. He had to occupy a cottage belonging to the farmer for whom he worked, and if he was dismissed or left his employer he had to leave the house as well.

This would be sufficient to account for the younger and more enterprising men leaving the country for places where freer labor conditions existed. Referring to the teaching staff in country schools the same speaker said:

"The teacher in a rural school is expected to have the spirit of a naturalist, the manual dexterity of an artisan, the experience of a horticulturist and the culture of a County Councillor. For these admirable qualities he will receive the pay of a clerk." Another speaker said that the early age at which tens of thousands of children are withdrawn from school was deplorable. The education they actually receive kills their desire to make things with their hands. They leave school having no idea for what form of occupation they are adapted other than clerical pursuits. They do not seem to desire to spend the day of a clerk in any profitable way, but prefer to waste it in idleness.